

A short exposé on: South African Genealogical Research



Are you looking for specific information and you do not know where to look? In this Article we will be addressing different solutions for your genealogical research issues and how to break through those seemingly “unbreakable” barriers into your family past.

With exciting **NEW** online resources, and many of them **FREE**, you can now also be an armchair detective and find those long-lost relatives.

South African genealogy starts with the written history of the country when the first Europeans settled at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. All South African history in the country before that time is not documented and thus impossible to trace. The only genealogical information before 1652 would be located outside of South Africa's borders and we will look at that as well. With the constant growth of the internet more and more records become available online on a daily basis and many of them can be obtained at no cost. Some of the larger sites still has the monopoly on some of the documentation and these can only be obtained if you have some cash at hand. We will give some tricks of the trade to circumvent these monetary issues and help you get it all done without dishing out your wallet. Some things must be said, time and travel is not free and these can never be sidestepped.

01 - FFY

(The First Fifty Years - Project) – (<http://www.e-family.co.za/ffy/>)

This Project aims to document the genealogical information of the first European families in the first 50 years (1652-1702) after the first settlers arrived at the Cape of Good Hope. All information on this site is **FREE** and can be searched without registering to the site. With an impressive search engine it can lookup most individuals that register to have been in the country at that time. It also contains transcribed information from church record up to 1749 from Cape Town, Drakenstein and Stellenbosch which were the 3 main hubs at the time.



02 - FamilySearch

(Slave Records & Birth, Marriages and Death Records) – (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2739063>)

Slavery form part of South Africa's history from 1650 – 1838 at which time slavery was abolished. FamilySearch is a well-known, **FREE** genealogical search engine with information (both transcribed and photos of the originals) from the whole historical period of South Africa from 1652 – Present day. It is notable that Family search does have the slave records from 1762 – 1838 available online.



03 – Geni

(Slave Records & Family Trees) - (<https://www.geni.com/projects/South-African-Slaves/10114>)

Geni.com is an online Genealogical site where you can build your family tree online **FREE** of charge and then share and collaborate with other researchers. A lot of other family trees can be searched and it is an invaluable resource if you need to get genealogical information quickly. Notably they also have slave records online as well as other resources.



04 – WikiTree

(Family Trees) – (<https://www.wikitree.com/>)

Similar to Geni.com, WikiTree is an online Genealogical site where you can build your family tree online FREE of charge and then share and collaborate with other researchers.



05 - National Archives of South Africa (NASA)

(Births, Marriages and Death Records) – (<http://www.national.archsrch.gov.za/sm300cv/smws/sm300dl>)



The National Archives of South Africa has repositories located at Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Bloemfontein and Pretoria. After you have obtained the document reference numbers via their **FREE** online search engine, these individual repositories can then also be visited **FREE** of charge to obtain the genealogical document.

Please note: The use of cameras is now prohibited at the National Archive Repositories and different fees are charged to obtain copies of transcripts of the original documents. To view the documents is FREE of charge though.

06 – 1820 South African Settlers

(Immigration Records) – (<http://www.southafricansettlers.com>)

This Site focus on the settlers from the British Isles to South Africa during the 19th century, particularly those who went in 1820, but also many who arrived before and after that year. Information has been drawn from Settler files at the Albany Museum and Cory Library in Grahamstown, South Africa. The Information is available FREE of charge and can be searched online.



07 – South African Genealogy Passenger Lists

(Immigration Records) – (<http://sagenealogy.co.za/about-the-databases/>)

South African Genealogy

There is no single official database available of passengers arriving or calling in South Africa. As a result, any lists that are available have been painstakingly harvested from newspapers and other publications over the years by avid genealogists. All the lists that has been accumulated are now searchable in the **FREE** “Search the Database” facility.

08 – UK Immigrant Ships Lists

(Immigrant Records) – (http://immigrants.byu.edu/main_page)

Between 1821 and 1924 the British occupied South Africa, many British nationals came to settle in South Africa because of its common wealth status. These British ships departing from, and arriving at England had excellent records and the ships records can be searched online FREE of charge.



09 – Indentured Indians Ships Lists

(Immigration Records) – (<http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/SHIP/shipndx.html>)

Approximately 152,184 indentured Indians arrived under the scheme of indenture making a total of 384 trips. The



first ship the Truro arrived on 16 November 1860 and the last ship, the Umlazi arrived on 11 July 1911, marking the end of the notorious system of indenture. The ports of Madras and Calcutta served as the points of embarkation. The area indentured Indians came from, their caste, employers and places of employment, indenture number, name, fathers name, age and sex are given with each entry using this **FREE** search engine.

10 - British Concentration Camps of the South African War

(Concentration camp records - <https://www2.lib.uct.ac.za/mss/bccd/>)

From 1900 – 1902 there was a war in South Africa between the Boer's and The British called the "Anglo Boer War". Concentration camps were formed by the British army to house the residents of the two Boer republics of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. They were established towards the end of 1900, after Britain had invaded the Boer republics. A lot of men, woman and children died in these camps and the records for most of them can be searched online **FREE** of charge.



11 - The eGGSa Branch of The Genealogical Society of South Africa

(Newspaper Extracts, Family Bibles, Letters & Gravestones) – (<http://www.eggsa.org/search.html>)



The eGGSa is a branch of the eGGSa Branch of The Genealogical Society of South Africa and has a wealth of information available online at **NO COST**. These include many images of family bibles, newspaper extracts and gravestones that can viewed and searched using their search engine. The gravestone images is supplied by volunteers and they do aim to capture all the graves in cemeteries although it is not always possible.

12 – VITAE Online Memorials

(Gravestones & Government Gazettes) – (<https://vitae.co.za/Home/Graves>)

VITAE has an extensive list of Grave Registers which can be searched **FREE** of charge. A lot of the graveyards that has not been captured by the other sites is available at VITAE's site. The site also hosts memorials for the deceased as well as a search engine to search the Government Gazette for deceased estates. Their mission is to weekly add new content, so if you do not find your ancestor, come back to the site at a later stage and check for updates.



13 – Billion Graves

(Gravestones) – (<https://billiongraves.com/>)



Billion-Graves has an extensive collection of graves from all around the globe including South Africa. These gravestone images is supplied by volunteers and full cemeteries is rarely captured. The amount of gravestones on this site is quite impressive though and it is definitely a valued source.

14 – Find-A-Grave

(Gravestones) – (<https://www.findagrave.com/>)

Similar to Billion-Graves, Find-A-Grave has an extensive collection of graves from all around the globe including South Africa. These gravestone images is supplied by volunteers and full cemeteries is rarely captured.



15 - Commonwealth War Graves Commission

(War Graves) – (<https://www.cwgc.org/>)

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, and ensures they will never be forgotten.



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

16 – South Africa War Grave Project

(War Graves) – (<http://southafricawargraves.org/>)

The goal of the South Africa War Graves Project is to archive photographs of every single South African war grave from the 2nd Anglo-Boer War, WW1, WW2, Korea, Rand Revolt, Freedom Struggle, Angola-Border War to present day.



17 – University of The Witwatersrand – Historical papers

(Newspapers, Church Records and more) – (<http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/>)



A not-so-well-known site with good resources. The site is not very user friendly but if you spend some time browsing around, you could find some real gems.



18 – Paid sites for FREE?

(Newspapers, Births, Marriages, Death Records, Census Records and much, much more.....)

And now for the cherry on the proverbial cake..... If you have exhausted the list above and still have not found what you need, you can access the following paid sites free of charge and we'll tell you how, but first the list of the sites:



The 19th Century British Library Newspapers digital archive—<http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

Access Newspaper Archives—<http://www.newspaperarchive.com>

Alexander Street Press, American Civil War—<http://alexanderstreet.com/>

American Ancestors—<http://www.americanancestors.org/>

Ancestry.com—<http://www.ancestry.com/>

FamNet—<http://www.nzgdb.co.nz/>

findmypast—<http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Fold3—<http://www.fold3.com/>

Geneanet—<http://geneanet.org>

Kinpoint Premium—<https://kinpoint.com>

MyHeritage—Library Edition—<http://myheritagelibraryedition.com/research>

Paper Trail—<http://www.paper-trail.org/>

ProQuest Obituary Listings—<http://obituaries.proquest.com/obitsweb/obits/do/home>

Puzzilla—<https://puzzilla.org>

World Vital Records—<https://www.worldvitalrecords.com/>



Looking at this list, the 3 biggest paid sites included: **Ancestry.com**, **findmypast.co.uk** and **MyHeritage.com**. So how can you access these sites for free? Well here is the catch, you can access it for free but not from home. The Church of Latter-day Saints has Family History Centres located across the country and in many locations. If you visit one of these centres, you can access these paid sites for free from their premises. Please see their site to find a Family History Centre near you: <https://www.familysearch.org/locations/>. They also have dedicated staff to assist you with your research and give you pointers.

For **FREE** international research we also recommend these sites:

- [FamilySearch](#): world's largest Free genealogy resource site
- [Fulton History](#): historical newspapers from the US and Canada
- [Google News Archive](#): millions of archived newspaper pages
- [Automated Genealogy](#): indexes of the Canadian census



- [FreeBMD](#): civil registration index of births, marriages and deaths for England and Wales
- [USGenWeb Project](#): massive free genealogy resource directory by US state and county
- [WorldGenWeb Project](#): genealogy resources by country and region, not to miss
- [Cyndi's List](#): highly respected directory of free genealogy resources and databases online
- [Library and Archives Canada](#): official archives of Canada, census records and more
- [Ellis Island](#): immigration records, free indexes and original records, fee to download copies
- [FreeReg](#): baptism, marriage, and burial records from parish registers of the UK
- [POWVETS](#): WWII POW search for prisoners of war held in German camps.
- [RootsWeb](#): world's largest genealogy community, huge amount of free information
- [Castle Garden](#): immigration records, pre Ellis Island
- [Chronicling America](#): giant database of archived US newspapers from the Library of Congress
- [Dead Fred](#): genealogy photo archive
- [African Heritage Project](#): records on former slaves, freedpersons and their descendants
- [Immigrant Ancestors Project](#): emigration registers for locating birthplaces of immigrants [Daughters of the American Revolution](#): military service records and more
- [JewishGen](#): Jewish ancestry research
- [FreeCEN](#): transcribed census records from the UK
- [Access Genealogy](#): vast family history directories and more, good Native American resources
- [British Library, India Office](#): records on British and European people in India pre 1950
- [Guild of One-Name Studies](#): extensive surname research site
- [Genealogy Trails](#): transcribed genealogical records from across the U.S.
- [NativeWeb Genealogy](#): list of Native American genealogy resources and searchable databases
- [Viximus](#): member submitted biographical information
- [WieWasWie](#): for researching ancestors from the Netherlands
- [UK National Archives](#): official National Archives of the UK
- [The National Archives of Ireland](#): official National Archives of Ireland
- [GENUKI](#): reference library of genealogical resources for the UK and Ireland
- [German Genealogy Server](#): German ancestry research (many sections in German)
- [Preserve the Pensions](#): War of 1812 pension records access
- [Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System](#): Civil War records from the National Park Service
- [LitvakSIG](#): Lithuanian-Jewish genealogy databases and resources
- [Italian Genealogical Group](#): Italian American genealogy resources and databases
- [Internet Archive](#): a large amount of useful information, but you'll need to do some digging
- [Open Library](#): good place to find family history books, search for surnames or locations
- [GenDisasters](#): for researching disasters and events your ancestors might have been involved in
- [RomanyGenes](#): Romanichal ancestry research
- [Patriot and Grave Index](#): revolutionary war graves registry and patriot index from the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution
- [Illinois Digital Newspaper Collection](#): vast number of archived US newspapers
- [Seventh-day Adventist Obituary Database](#): hundreds of thousands of obituary entries
- [Släktdata](#): genealogy records for Sweden (in Swedish)
- [Hispanic Genealogy](#): wonderful list of resources for researching Hispanic ancestry
- [Free Genealogy Search Engine](#): search hundreds of resources at one time on Family History Daily

Happy huntings.....

